



# Louisiana Coshatta Basket Makers

Traditional Knowledge, Resourcefulness, and Artistry  
as a Means of Survival

**LINDA P. LANGLEY and DENISE E. BATES**

*Louisiana Coshatta Basket Makers* brings together oral histories, tribal records, archival materials, and archaeological evidence to explore the fascinating history of the Coshatta Tribe's famed basket weavers. After settling at their present location near the town of Elton, Louisiana, in the 1880s, the Coshatta (Koasati) tribe developed a basket industry that bolstered the local tribal economy and became the basis for generating tourism and political mobilization. The baskets represented a material culture that distinguished the Coshattas as Indigenous people within an ethnically and racially diverse region. Tribal leaders serving as diplomats also used baskets as strategic gifts as they built political and economic alliances throughout the twentieth century, thereby securing the Coshattas' future.

Behind all these efforts were the basket makers themselves. Although a few Coshatta men assisted in the production of baskets, it was mostly women who put in the long hours to gather and process the materials, then skillfully stitch them together to produce treasures of all shapes and sizes. The art of basket making exists within a broader framework of Coshatta traditional teachings and educational practices that have persisted to the present.

As they tell the story of Coshatta basket makers, Linda P. Langley and Denise E. Bates provide a better understanding of the tribe's culture and values. The weavers' own "language of baskets" shapes this narrative, which depicts how the tribe survived repeated hardships as weavers responded on their own terms to market demands. The work of Coshatta basket makers represents the perseverance of traditional knowledge in the form of unique and carefully crafted fine art that continues to garner greater recognition and appreciation with every successive generation.

## **PRAISE FOR *LOUISIANA COUSHATTA BASKET MAKERS*:**

"By anchoring Coshatta history 'through the lens of basketry,' this book adds significantly to our understanding of the dynamic and complex ways in which Indigenous communities have put their material culture to use."

—Daniel H. Usner,  
author of *Weaving Alliances with Other Women:  
Chitimacha Indian Work in the New South*

"This is not another book on baskets. It speaks with the Coshatta artisans and their culture in ways that are themselves exciting."

—Hiram F. "Pete" Gregory,  
coeditor of *The Work of Tribal Hands:  
Southeastern Indian Split Cane Basketry*

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RESOURCEFULNESS, AND ARTISTRY  
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